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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2983
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SUBJECT: ALGERIAN COMMITMENT TO AMISOM COMES FROM THE TOP

REF: SECSTATE 134421

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche on December 28 to Kamel Rezag-Bara, Counselor to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika for Counter-terrorism. He thanked Rezag-Bara for Algeria's commitment to provide ten aircraft to transport African Union member troops into Somalia, and stressed the urgency of having the aircraft ready as early as possible given the planned January 5 withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia.

¶2. (SBU) Rezag-Bara responded that President Bouteflika was personally committed to empowering the African Union to manage security on the continent. In this regard, Rezag-Bara explained that Algeria's commitment went beyond the ten aircraft it had provided to support AMISOM. He noted the recent meeting of African Union chiefs of staff in Tripoli, at which agreement was reached to establish an African Union "standby force" that would be coordinated via five separate regional groups. Rezag-Bara said that from the countries that attended the Tripoli meeting, Algeria was selected to be the overall coordinator of this effort, and would be providing training and equipment to help create this standby force.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: Rezag-Bara understood the timeline. He noted that Algeria was going to be coordinating via the African Union, but also took pride in Algeria's regional role on African security within the context of the AU. Bouteflika himself has long seen engagement in Africa as a key part of his legacy. Algeria is therefore likely to do the necessary if AMISOM troops are ready for transport on an accelerated timetable.
PEARCE